

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**GUIDANCE FOR PREPARING APPLICATIONS
FOR EVEN START STATEWIDE
FAMILY LITERACY INITIATIVE GRANTS**



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Introduction

Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grants support state efforts to create bold, new strategies to improve and expand family literacy services to economically and educationally disadvantaged families with young children. These grants are authorized by Section 1202(c) of the Even Start Family Literacy program law (Part B of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).) Congress requires each state that receives one of these grants to establish a consortium of representatives from specified programs to address the challenges of providing and expanding high-quality family literacy services to those families. These consortia can marshal existing literacy and other resources to support family literacy, set rigorous standards for family literacy program quality, provide high-quality training and technical assistance to improve local family literacy projects, and revise and refine state policy and program administration to facilitate local project operations and continuous improvement of services. These consortia can also align themselves with other state reforms in literacy, education, and welfare to ensure the existence of a more comprehensive and coherent portfolio of services for low-income families.

The purpose of this guidance is to help states plan their Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives and to assist them in preparing applications. The guidance explains key requirements of the legislation and the attached grant application notice, and also presents some options that states may wish to consider as they plan their initiatives. We are providing this guidance to help applicants strengthen their grant applications. As indicated in the application notice, we anticipate having sufficient funds for all states that submit high-quality applications to receive awards. We hope that this guidance will assist states in submitting those high-quality applications. However, following this guidance does not assure an applicant of funding, or bind the Department in any way to funding an application. Rather, an independent review panel of experts will evaluate applications for funding based upon the selection criteria published in the application notice.

We begin the guidance by reviewing the purpose of the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grants. Next, we discuss how states can form the consortia that will be responsible for carrying out the initiative's activities. In the third section, we explain requirements and expectations for coordinating Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives with other programs. We also offer suggestions for other activities that can be funded by these grants and how to garner additional support by matching federal funds with state and local funds and in-kind contributions. The fourth section provides guidance about meeting the absolute priority on setting performance indicators for the Even Start program.¹ The last section reviews requirements for evaluating the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives. **"Tips for Applicants"** appear throughout the guidance. These tips describe important topics and issues to assist states and their consortia in strengthening their proposals.

¹ For clarity and consistency in this guidance, we have chosen to use the term "performance indicator" to refer to the indicators that are required under Section 1210 of the Even Start law. We use this term because it connotes the importance of concentrating on program outcomes. Other terms, such as "program quality indicators" typically focus on quality in program design and operation, but may not emphasize participant performance and outcomes.

Purpose of Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative Grants

1. What are the purposes of Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grants?

The purposes of the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grants are to support state efforts to (a) strengthen and expand family literacy services and (b) coordinate and, as appropriate, integrate existing federal, state, and local literacy resources. These efforts must be consistent with the fundamental purpose of Even Start, which is to improve the educational opportunities of low-income families with young children. As we explain in the remainder of this guidance, states can achieve these purposes in a variety of ways. It is important that, as states develop the plans for their initiatives, they address how the activities they propose will (a) improve the quality of family literacy services available in the state and (b) expand these services either by increasing the amount of these services through increasing the intensity or duration of services, and/or by expanding the number of families who receive them.

Tip for Applicants: *Include in the application a clear statement of the proposed Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative's goals and objectives for strengthening and expanding family literacy services. To the extent possible, specify these goals and objectives in observable and quantifiable terms. In addition, and as we discuss below in our responses to Questions 14 and 18 describe how each of the activities proposed for the initiative will contribute to achieving these goals and objectives. Finally, as we discuss in our response to Question 25, a state's plan for evaluating the initiative should explain how the evaluation will assess progress in achieving the goals and objectives.*

2. What are “family literacy services”?

According to Section 1210 of the Even Start law, “family literacy services” mean services provided to participants on a voluntary basis that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and that integrate all of the following activities:

- Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children (often called “parent and child time” or “PACT”)
- Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children (often called “parenting education”)
- Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency (this can be adult basic education, adult secondary education, or English-as-a-second-language (ESL) training)
- An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experience (this can be for children at birth through age seven)

Family literacy services provided to participants supported under the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grants must meet these basic requirements for Even Start family literacy projects.

Tip for Applicants: *Include in the application a clear description of how the initiative's activities will enable the state to strengthen and expand family literacy services as described above, consistent with the Even Start program requirements.*

Forming a Consortium

3. What is a consortium for the purposes of these grants?

A consortium is a group of programs, organizations, and other entities that agree to work together toward a common goal. In this case, the consortium is a group of federal and state programs and other organizations and entities, and the common goal is improving and expanding family literacy services in the state. Each consortium supported under this initiative will assess the needs for improving family literacy services in the consortium's state, develop a plan for meeting those needs, ensure that the plan is implemented, and make sure that the consortium's improvement objectives are met.

4. Must a state establish a consortium to receive an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grant?

Yes. The law requires that, to receive a grant, a state must establish a consortium that includes state-level representatives from at least the following programs:

- Title I, Part A (LEA grants)
- Even Start (Title I, Part B)
- Migrant Education (Title I, Part C)
- Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (Title I, Part E, Section 1502)
- Head Start (e.g., Director of Head Start State Collaboration Project, President of state Head Start Association)
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and other state-funded adult literacy programs
- State-funded preschool programs

Together, these programs represent a critical core of resources for providing education and literacy services to low-income children and their families. More important, they are among the primary providers of family literacy and related services in the states. The consortia they form could take the lead in expanding and improving family literacy services.

5. May representatives from programs other than those required under the law be part of the consortium?

Yes. We encourage states to include all programs, organizations, and entities that can make meaningful contributions to an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative. Programs and their representatives (other than the required members) may be added to the consortium after the state has submitted its application. Identifying these additional programs and individual representatives can enhance the consortium's capacity to carry out its work as well as expand the base of support for the initiative.

For example, because a consortium supported by an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grant must integrate and coordinate activities and resources with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, among others, a state may want to include state TANF officials on the consortium. Similarly, if a state is seeking a grant under the Reading Excellence Act (REA), the state may want to include a representative of the state REA partnership on the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative consortium. If the state has received an REA grant, we encourage it to include a representative from the new partnership on the consortium to ensure that the requirement for coordination with the REA partnership is met. A State also may want to include a representative from the state office administering its Child Care and Development grant. Finally, if the consortium's plan includes heightened efforts to communicate with parents about the availability of family literacy programs and services, the consortium may want to consider adding the state's Goals 2000 Parent Information and Resource Center to its membership.

6. Who should represent the member programs and organizations on the consortium?

Experience shows that the following five factors are important in selecting individuals who will represent the member organizations on the consortium. Specifically, these representatives should:

- Be leaders within their organizations, although not necessarily the director or chief administrative officer
- Have the authority to represent their organizations in meetings and other activities, particularly in discussions about resource allocations
- Be familiar with the overall goals and objectives of their organizations and how these goals and objectives are or can be related to family literacy
- Have the time necessary to carry out their responsibilities as members of the consortium
- Be able to communicate about the work of the consortium to their program's staff and grantees (if applicable)

In cases in which consortium members are not familiar with the Even Start family literacy model or do not have experience operating or managing a family literacy program, consortium leaders should devote some time to orienting those members to the Even Start model, resource needs, and policy supports.

7. What is the role of the consortium?

Just as each state will have its own set of family literacy program improvement needs and objectives, each consortium will have a unique leadership role to play in that state's Even Start Statewide

Family Literacy Initiative. For example, some consortia may assume a hands-on role in all of the activities and individual members of the consortia may be actively engaged in every component of the initiative. Alternatively, some consortia may opt to assign particular tasks to individual consortium members, with the consortium as a whole responsible for overseeing the work. In every case, the consortium will assume responsibility for the success of the initiative by providing leadership, guidance, and oversight of the initiative's activities, and ensuring coordination among the various offices and programs involved in the initiative.

8. What factors are critical to the success of an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative consortium?

No matter what role or roles an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative consortium assumes, experience and research show that three factors are important to success:

- ***Consortia require strong leadership.*** Leaders must be able to work effectively with all of the members of the consortium. Leaders must also ensure that each member of the consortium is able to make his or her own views known and that he or she is respected by the group. In addition, leaders must be able to facilitate discussions about difficult issues, particularly when there are competing points of view. Without these leadership skills, the members of the consortium will find it difficult to reach solid consensus on key issues, much less achieve their family literacy program improvement and expansion goals.

Although it is expected that the Even Start State Coordinator will play a key role in all parts of a consortium's work, the Even Start State Coordinator is not required to be the formal leader of the consortium or of the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative. State leaders or consortium members may designate another person to lead the consortium.

- ***Consortia require the commitment of the partner programs and organizations.*** As an affiliation of individual programs and organizations, each consortium requires serious commitments within each partner program and organization. This means that each individual member of the consortium has a responsibility to be sure that the perspectives and interests of the program or organization he or she represents are communicated to the consortium. Members also have a responsibility to communicate within their organization about the work of the consortium. It is especially important for them to keep their colleagues apprised of the contributions that the consortium is making to achieving the organization's objectives as well as those of the consortium.
- ***Consortia require adequate resources.*** As consortia develop their plans for their Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives, it is important to determine what resources are necessary to carry out the plans. The Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grants provide a portion of these resources. However, an important role of individual consortium members will be to look for resources within their own organizations and elsewhere in the state that can be allocated to support the work of the consortium. We discuss specific requirements for matching the federal funds available through these grants with state and local resources in more detail in our responses to Questions 17, 18, and 19.

Tip for Applicants: *Include in the application clear explanations of:*

- *Who will serve on the consortium by title or position and provide evidence of their organization's commitment to carrying out the work of the consortium*
- *The responsibilities of individual members for completing the work of the consortium*
- *How members of the consortium will communicate with each other*

9. How large should the consortium be?

Although it is important to include representatives of key stakeholder groups and potential partners in the consortium, states should balance their decisions about including additional consortium members with considerations about overall effectiveness of the consortium. If a consortium becomes too large or if the interests of the members diverge too far from the central family literacy program improvement objectives, a consortium can become unwieldy and ineffective. An alternative to adding full members to the consortium is for the consortium to invite individuals and organizations to join in particular consortium activities that are most consistent with their own interests.

10. When should a state convene the consortium with all of the required members?

We encourage states to convene their consortia as early as possible so that each state's consortium members can work together to develop a high-quality plan for an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative to include in its grant application. Specifically, a state should allow enough time prior to submitting its application by the October 15, 1999 deadline for the required members of the consortium to complete the following types of activities related to developing an effective plan for expanding and improving family literacy programs and services:

- Become familiar with the meaning of family literacy services and the Even Start model
- Get to know each other's program interests and reasons for joining the consortium, and identify how a statewide initiative could benefit each program
- Begin establishing strong working relationships
- Assess what each program currently brings to one or more components of family literacy services, and what that program could contribute to a statewide initiative
- Begin to assess family literacy needs in the state (e.g., the needs of various regions, the needs of various populations of economically and educationally disadvantaged families)
- Set family literacy program improvement and expansion goals and objectives
- Develop a plan for achieving these goals and objectives
- Identify other organizations and their representatives who should be included in the consortium or the consortium's activities
- Identify state and local resources that will be allocated to support the consortium's work

Many of these activities will continue after the grant for an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative is awarded, and there are likely to be some shifts or refinements in certain elements of the plan. However, there can be no changes in the scope and goals of the initiative after a grant award has been made without prior approval from the U.S. Department of Education.

Tip for Applicants: *Include in the application evidence that a consortium with at least the required members developed the plan for the state's Even State Statewide Family Literacy Initiative and describe the roles that individual members played in the development process. Describe the specific gaps or weaknesses in family literacy services, infrastructure, or opportunities the consortium identified, and how the proposed initiative addresses those gaps.*

Designing Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives: Coordination, Integration, and Other Key Activities

11. Must the consortium coordinate its activities with specific programs?

Yes. In requiring the consortia to carry out the activities of the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives, Congress requires them to ensure that the initiative activities are coordinated with the activities of four of the member organizations:

- Part A of Title I
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
- Head Start
- TANF

In addition, if a state receives an REA reading and literacy grant, the state must coordinate the initiative's activities with the activities of the state's REA partnership. We also encourage these Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives to work with the organizations represented by other consortium members, including Migrant Education, Comprehensive School Reform Demonstrations, and state-funded pre-school and adult literacy programs. Finally, we encourage initiatives to coordinate with programs that can make important contributions to family literacy efforts, such as programs for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities supported under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

12. Why is coordination important to the success of an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative?

The requirements for coordination set a standard for the breadth of the working relationships established by the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative. By focusing on both coordination and integration, they direct states to concentrate on efficient and effective use of resources to improve and expand family literacy services. At the same time and in recognition of the fact that each state has its own portfolio of programs and policies and resource base, these requirements do not prescribe specific coordination strategies within or across state agencies and programs.

These requirements for coordination, collaboration, and integration with other programs are intended to encourage Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative consortia to explore a range of options for:

- Making sure that the emerging Even Start performance indicators and indicator system are, to the extent possible, consistent with the related accountability systems of other programs that typically join with Even Start to provide family literacy services, such as adult education and Head Start (See our responses to Questions 20-24 for additional guidance about setting Even Start performance indicators.)
- Marshalling resources, including monetary resources as well as infrastructure supports such as statewide databases and information systems, to create the largest possible base of support for family literacy services and serve the largest possible number of low-income families

- Achieving economies of scale in providing family literacy services and increasing the efficiency of service delivery systems
- Ensuring continuity of services and effective transitions as families and individual family members progress through the education system

Tip for Applicants: *In the application, describe how the proposed initiative will be coordinated with the required programs, with similar family literacy efforts, and with other appropriate community, state, and federal programs. Explain how the initiative will be coordinated with efforts to develop performance indicators and standards for family literacy-related programs such as Head Start and adult education.*

13. Should the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative be part of a state’s comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students?

Yes. As a consortium plans the state’s Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative, the consortium should review the state’s comprehensive improvement plan or similar policy documents to determine how the proposed initiative can support and contribute to the larger improvement effort. For example, a state’s plan for developing Even Start performance indicators should ensure that the performance indicators for early childhood services address school readiness goals that support content and performance standards for elementary education. Similarly, the adult education performance indicators, particularly those indicators related to adult learning outcomes, should be consistent with the state’s student content and performance standards, and, as appropriate, entrance standards for postsecondary institutions.

Tip for Applicants: *In the application, describe how the proposed initiative will support and contribute to the state’s comprehensive school improvement plan. For example, an application could explain how the initiative’s activities relate to the state’s comprehensive plan submitted under ESEA or how the activities complement a state’s school reform initiative.*

14. How might a consortium use the funds available under an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grant?

We encourage states to consider a variety of options for using the funds available under this grant to improve and expand family literacy services. In planning an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative, a state should carefully review how each of the activities proposed for the initiative will contribute to achieving the initiative’s overall goals and objectives.² In addition to using funds for such things as helping build common ground for consortium members, expanding work on family literacy

² Any activities involving reading instruction must be based upon “scientifically based reading research,” as that term is defined in Section 2252 of the REA.

services already underway in the state, or stimulating new collaborations, a state could include the following types of activities as part of its Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative:

- ***Support a statewide professional development effort that adopts and implements recommendations and findings from the best available research on reading and literacy instruction for early childhood, adult education, and/or parenting education.*** A state could design this effort for staff working in projects providing family literacy services, or specifically for those staff working with special populations such as families with English language learners, migrant or homeless families, or families with children or adults with learning disabilities. In order to facilitate expanding family literacy services, the state could also include staff from potential collaborating agencies and organizations.
- ***Support pilot projects to model particular service delivery options.*** A state could specify the kinds of models—either whole project models or models of one or more of the four Even Start components. States could also pilot test new service delivery models targeted at the unique needs of special populations (e.g., families headed by teenage parents, families headed by adults with learning disabilities), or providing services in underserved parts of the State or in unique settings (e.g., workplace, prisons). Grant funds could support both design and implementation of the models as well as demonstration and mentoring activities. Any local pilot project supported by an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative must incorporate the Even Start program elements, including providing for an independent evaluation of that project, and other requirements for local Even Start projects, such as eligibility requirements.
- ***Provide training and technical assistance, including extensive follow-up, to local projects providing family literacy services to help them improve program quality by modifying their projects to address the performance indicators.*** This could be done through a network of peer mentors created within the state. Alternatively, several states could work together in this area. Grant funds could cover the costs of training the peer mentors and support their work with local projects. Alternatively, grant funds could cover the costs of external consultants who provide the training and technical assistance, teaching centers, or regional training.
- ***Develop a set of video training modules to support implementation of performance indicators.*** Grant funds could be used to prepare and distribute a high-quality video series on effective family literacy services and strategies for program organization. The modules could be used for training staff, familiarizing new project directors with their role, and explaining what family literacy is all about to prospective local partners.
- ***Use an external facilitator to assist consortium members in coalescing around the initiative and in mapping current family literacy programs and options for expanding them and their base of support.*** States may find it beneficial to use an external facilitator who can bring objective insights and perspectives to the conversation among diverse consortium participants and ensure that all members have an opportunity to express their views and that negotiations and disagreements around difficult issues are resolved satisfactorily. A state may also want to hire policy analysts to complement the initial needs assessment by preparing a detailed review and analysis of the state's family literacy policies and the resources available for family literacy services. This map could serve as a valuable tool for the consortium as it implements its plan for the family literacy initiative.

- ***Provide training and technical support to improve the quality of local evaluations of Even Start family literacy projects.*** States could organize a small group of program evaluation specialists and family literacy experts to provide training and technical support to local evaluators and Even Start project directors and staff. These activities could focus on specific evaluation strategies as well as planning the evaluations and using the results for improving project activities and services.
- ***Convene a series of focus groups to (a) identify problems in program quality and gaps in services or (b) solicit comments and build consensus around a new set of Even Start performance indicators.*** These focus groups could take place at local project sites and bring together all of the local partners and key stakeholders to review the new performance indicators. Grant funds could be used to cover the costs of these sessions and to pay researchers to conduct the focus groups and report back to the Even Start program staff and the consortium.

These are just some of the options that states may want to consider in thinking about how funds available to support their Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative could be spent. Other possibilities include collaborating with other programs in the use of technology to establish a statewide data collection system or to create the infrastructure for electronic professional development or learning networks, creating and funding a statewide evaluation system, or establishing a resource clearinghouse. We encourage states and their consortia to think boldly and creatively about how best to achieve the improvement and expansion goals they set for their Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives.

Tip for Applicants: *In the application, describe how the initiative will focus on strengthening or expanding family literacy services to low-income families. Describe any existing state initiatives that promote family literacy for families with economic and educational needs, and how the activities proposed for the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative will complement existing programs or address gaps in the current services. In addition, describe the state's expectations for how the proposed activities will result in system change or improvement within the state.*

15. Does the application notice include invitational priorities?

Yes. The application notice indicates that the Secretary is particularly interested in applications that propose any or all of the following activities:

- Adopting and implementing recommendations and findings from the best available research on reading and literacy.
- Implementing a professional development plan for staff working in family literacy programs that is based upon the best available research on emerging literacy, language development, and reading instruction, especially for families who are limited English proficient, migrant or homeless and adults and children with disabilities
- Strategies to increase the intensity of local family literacy activities for school-age children through seven years old through before- and after-school, weekend, and summer literacy

activities, including family literacy activities for families who are limited English proficient, migrant or homeless and adults and children with disabilities

- Strategies to strengthen local evaluations for Even Start family literacy projects (required by Section 1205(10) of the Even Start law) so that those evaluations generate data that can be used for continuous improvement efforts, including improved literacy outcomes for adults and children

Applications that meet one or more of these priorities do not receive competitive or absolute preference over other applications.

16. Must an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative address the invitational priorities included in the application notice?

No. However, these invitational priorities do represent special areas of interest to the Department. Therefore, we encourage states to consider whether these areas and the activities that might be included in them will help the proposed Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives achieve their goals and objectives for expanding and improving Even Start programs. Applications that address the invitational priorities do not receive more favorable reviews for doing so.

17. Is there a matching requirement for Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grants?

Yes. Congress requires states to provide a 100 percent match of funds *or* in-kind contributions to support their Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives. This helps ensure that states develop the capacity, while they have the support of the federal grant, to continue the important work of the initiative once the grant has concluded.

States may combine state or local funds with in-kind contributions to meet the match requirements. No federal funds or resources can be used to meet this matching requirement unless a waiver is obtained as described in Question 19. Therefore, as consortium members set about developing their plans, they should look carefully at state and local resources that can be allocated to support their Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative. State and/or local resources can be used to meet this matching requirement only if they are *not* being used to meet the matching requirement under another federal grant.

18. How might a state meet the matching requirement?

In addressing the challenge of meeting the matching requirement, states should identify state and local resources that help accomplish the proposed initiative's program improvement and expansion goals. They might, for example, look at the routine operations of the consortium's member organizations to see which, if any, of these might become part of the resources earmarked for the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative. States might also look for resources in places where family literacy may not yet figure prominently in people's thinking or work, such as local philanthropic organizations and the business community. Or a state may choose to contribute new funds to further the work of the initiative in strengthening and expanding family literacy services in the state.

Depending on the consortium's plan, as the following examples illustrate, there is a wide range of options (in addition to new funds) for how a state might meet the matching requirement.

- ***A portion of the annual training and professional development activities of a state-funded Pre-K program could be devoted to preparing staff to work in family literacy programs.*** The entire direct cost of these activities, including staff time, facilities, trainers' preparation and salaries, and materials, could be counted as part of the match.
- ***The resources and facilities of a state's distance learning system could be used for staff development.*** A state could use its distance learning facilities and network to provide training and staff development as well as orientation of potential local partners. All production and staff direct costs associated with producing the videos or other packages, as well as the direct operating costs associated with their dissemination, could be counted toward the match.
- ***A statewide library program could work with the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative to expand services in local projects.*** The statewide library program could work with local libraries and Even Start projects to develop a statewide agenda for literacy activities in those libraries for families and individual family members. For example, libraries could provide reading and story-telling activities. Libraries could also create reading and other literacy activities for young children and activities to teach their parents about research and writing. These activities could become regular off-site extensions of the early childhood education, parenting education, and adult education components of local Even Start projects. All direct costs of developing the statewide library family literacy agenda, including direct costs associated with design and staff training, could be counted toward the match.
- ***Annual meetings of state-supported early childhood, parenting education, and/or adult education groups could be devoted to discussions of expanding and improving family literacy.*** One or more of these organizations, in coordination with a state's family literacy consortium, could plan an annual meeting to address issues related to its members' involvement in improving and expanding family literacy services. Direct costs associated with planning and conducting the meeting could be counted toward the match.
- ***A university or college could devote a graduate seminar to assisting the consortium in compiling a map of family literacy resources in the state as part of larger policy studies or evaluations.*** Under the guidance of a faculty member, individual seminar participants could choose an area of program services or policy for study. Upon completing their individual tasks, the seminar participants could prepare and present a report to the consortium. Seminar direct costs, including the salary of the faculty member and the time of the students, could be counted toward the match.

Tip for Applicants: *Describe in the application the matching resources, either funds or in-kind contributions, that will be available to support the proposed Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative. Include information about the sources and amount of the match and evidence that the source is, indeed, committed to making the match available to the initiative.*

19. If a state determines, after designing its Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative and exploring non-federal sources of matching funds or in-kind contributions, that sufficient matching resources are not available from non-federal sources, may the state request a waiver of the requirement that only non-federal resources be used to match the federal funds?

Yes. After designing an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative around the unique family literacy needs of the state, each state is strongly encouraged to explore all possible non-federal resources that it might appropriately contribute to that initiative. Drawing on non-federal contributions is important to building a successful collaborative statewide effort to strengthen and expand family literacy services that will continue after the federal funding for the initiative has ended. However, if a state is unable to identify sufficient non-federal matching resources, the state may seek a waiver of part or all of the non-federal source requirement if the state educational agency is the applicant state office or agency. That waiver, if approved, would allow the state to meet the matching requirement by using federal resources (e.g., Head Start, Title I, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, IDEA, REA) that are not being used to match another federal grant.

Any waiver request must meet the required criteria in Section 14401 of the ESEA by, among other things, identifying how the waiver would contribute to improvements in teaching and learning. In addition, applicants should explain how the state is unable to locate sufficient matching funds and/or in-kind contributions from any appropriate non-federal source. Applicants should submit their waiver request with their application. The Department's Waiver Board will consider those waiver requests for any applicant that is selected for an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grant following evaluation of the application by the review panel. To receive assistance concerning a waiver request, or if potential waiver applicants have questions concerning waiver requests, they may call the Department's Waiver Assistance Line at (202) 401-7081 or 1-800-USA-LEARN, or Patricia McKee at (202) 260-0826. Ms. McKee can also be reached via e-mail at patricia_mckee@ed.gov. Written waiver guidance, including specific information about preparing a request, is available upon request, and also can be found in the Department's on-line library at <http://www.ed.gov/flexibility>.

Developing Even Start Performance Indicators

20. What is the absolute priority for fiscal year 1999 Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grants?

The Secretary has announced an absolute priority for fiscal year 1999 Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grants under which the Department will support only state initiatives that include in the application (1) indicators of program quality, as described in Section 1210 of the Even Start law, that the state has developed for Even Start family literacy projects; or (2) a plan and timeline for the development of those indicators within a reasonable time period, not to exceed one year.

21. How does a state meet the absolute priority for Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grants?

A state meets the absolute priority for developing indicators of program quality as described in Section 1210 in one of two ways. First, a state may already have developed indicators for the Even Start program that meet the requirements of the legislation. If so, the state should include those indicators in its application. Alternatively, if a state has not yet developed indicators that meet the legislative requirements, the state must include in its statewide initiative grant application a plan and timeline for developing those indicators within one year of the date of the grant award.

22. What are performance indicators?

The term performance indicator can be used to refer to an indicator of (a) how individual participants in a program such as Even Start perform—the outcomes they achieve—as a result of participating in the program and (b) how a project performs in delivering services—the intensity, duration, or measure of quality. Performance indicators articulate standards and become the basis for measuring change, progress, and overall program quality. To be most useful, performance indicators should be based on solid research, sound theory, and the judgment of experienced professionals.

Section 1210 requires that Even Start indicators address specific areas of outcomes for adults and children who participate in local projects. Areas of adult outcomes include:

- Achievement in reading, writing, English language acquisition, problem solving, and numeracy
- Entry into postsecondary education, a job retraining program, or employment or career advancement, including the military
- Receipt of a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma

Areas of outcomes for children include:

- Improvement in ability to read on grade level or reading readiness
- School attendance
- Grade retention and promotion

Section 1210 also permits states to develop additional performance indicators as they deem appropriate.

We strongly encourage states, in addition to setting performance indicators for outcomes, to set performance indicators that specify the standards for high-quality program activities and design. In accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), the Department has established a set of objectives and performance indicators for the Even Start program as a whole. The GPRA indicators are set forth in the attached grant application notice at pp. 9232 and 9233 under the heading “Even Start Family Literacy Program Performance Plan.” These outcomes and indicators specify outcomes for adult education, early childhood education, and parenting education, and they also address several areas of program design. States are not required to adopt these objectives and indicators for their local Even Start projects. They may, however, want to review them as starting points for setting their own performance indicators.

The Department’s objectives and indicators include outcome indicators and indicators that specify elements of program design and operation. If projects meet the standards set by the indicators related to program design, it is assumed that they will achieve the outcomes also defined by the performance indicators. In the Department’s framework, performance indicators do not exist in isolation. Instead, they form a system that defines inputs and the outcomes that this set of inputs is expected to produce. When the elements of the indicator system are viewed separately, they are of limited use in designing high-quality family literacy programs or in assessing their effectiveness and impact.

23. Why are Even Start performance indicators important?

Performance indicators are the foundation of accountability systems and program evaluation. Projects are held accountable for meeting the indicators both in terms of the design of activities and services and in the outcomes achieved by participants. Local evaluations should be designed around the indicators and should yield both quantitative and qualitative data on how well the projects are doing in each of the areas included in the performance indicators.

Setting performance indicators and building consensus around them, particularly when there is broad-based participation in the process, can be very useful in Even Start program planning and development. Coming to agreement about expectations for outcomes and the program features necessary to achieve those outcomes necessarily involves (a) analyzing the family literacy and other needs of the population to be served; (b) planning and designing program activities and services necessary to help meet these needs; and (c) identifying the resources necessary to support these activities and services. The performance indicators inform details of program design and operation, and they can help define the role and contributions of partners and collaborators.

In the end, systems of performance indicators will be most useful to states when they establish ambitious, but reasonable, expectations for outcomes for all participants and rigorous, research-based standards for all of the elements of the Even Start program model.

24. Are Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative consortia necessarily responsible for developing performance indicators for the Even Start program if those indicators are not yet developed?

No. States may use a number of different approaches to developing the required performance indicators for the Even Start program. A state may decide that it is good practice to merge the development of the Even Start performance indicators into the consortium's activities. However, the state educational agency is formally responsible for the development of those indicators because Even Start is a state-administered program and development of the indicators is required by the Even Start law. In any case, a state may wish to have the consortium play a role in the development of the Even Start indicators, such as by helping coordinate the development of these indicators with the development of indicators in programs that are partners or collaborators with Even Start (e.g., Head Start, adult education).

Tip for Applicants: *For states that do not include in their applications Even Start performance indicators that meet the requirements of Section 1210, and plan to have an office or entity **other** than the consortium (in conjunction with the Even Start program) develop those indicators, include in the application information about (a) who will be responsible for developing the indicators; (b) what state agencies or offices will be involved in coordinating the development of these indicators with the development of indicators for other programs; and (c) a reasonable timeline for the development of those indicators (not to exceed one year from the date of the grant award).*

*For states that plan to have the consortium (in conjunction with the Even Start program) develop the Even Start performance indicators, include in the application the information indicated above as well as information about (a) how the state will decide which assessments or tests to use for each indicator; (b) what type of data collection and reporting system the state envisions for the assessment data; (c) what technical assistance will be provided to local projects for collecting and reporting the data; and (d) a reasonable timeline for **implementing** the indicators that includes dissemination and consensus building among local projects and other stakeholders, as well as time for modifying local project activities and services to meet the standards set by the indicators.*

Evaluation of Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives

25. Should there be an evaluation of an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative?

Yes. A state should conduct an evaluation of the Even Start Statewide Family Literacy initiative. In general, an evaluation serves two functions. First, the evaluation can help a consortium understand the extent to which its activities are on track and likely to result in achieving the consortium's goals and objectives. For example, this formative phase of the evaluation could examine the role and participation of members of the consortium and also look at whether or not the consortium has developed and used effective strategies for communicating with stakeholder groups on the progress of the initiative. A consortium could use results from the formative phase to inform decisions about mid-course corrections necessary to achieve its goals and objectives. Second, in its summative phase the evaluation can inform a consortium about the extent to which its goals and objectives were achieved and may also provide information about impediments to achieving them, the institutionalization of family literacy within the state, and specific improvements at both the state and local levels.

Tip for Applicants: *Include in the application a well-developed plan for evaluating the proposed Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative and for how the evaluation will be used to strengthen the initiative. For example, describe how the evaluator will work with the consortium to frame the evaluation questions. Include a timeline giving some indication of when evaluation results will be available to the consortium so that the consortium can, in fact, use those results in deciding about next steps. In addition, include a discussion of the proposed evaluator's experience and qualifications to conduct evaluations of the kinds of activities included in the consortium's portfolio.*